

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /031 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/CE:NCLEDSKY:WLS

APPROVED BY S/S -RELTZ

INR - MR. HYLAND

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Z O 070243Z MAY 74 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM FLASH

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 093432

EXDIS TOSEC 333

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW, PFOR, PGOV

SUBJECT: BRANDT RESIGNS: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

REFERENCE: BONN 7277

CHANCELLOR BRANDT'S RESIGNATION THIS EVENING, COUPLED WITH HIS LETTER TO FEDERAL PRESIDENT HEINEMANN ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GUILLAUME ESPIONAGE AFFAIR, HAS THRUST THE FRG INTO MOMENTARY CONFUSION. FEW FACTS ARE YET AVAILABLE. EMBASSY BONN 7277 PROVIDES A RUNDOWN OF DEVELOPMENTS THIS EVENING. THERE FOLLOWS A SET OF HIGHLY SPECULATIVE CONCLUSIONS BASED ON OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE DOMESTIC GERMAN SITUATION:

(1) THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR, ALTHOUGH IT WILL RECEIVE THE MAJOR ATTENTION, MAY BE ONLY THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK. THE REAL PROBLEM FOR MANY MONTHS HAS BEEN WILLY BRANDT--HIS INDECISIVENESS, HIS INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT.

(2) BRANDT'S REMOVAL COULD MAKE POSSIBLE THE RECON-
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STRUCTION OF A MORE EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT. THE GERMAN

ECONOMY IS SOUND. THE FDP AND SPD TOGETHER HAVE MORE IN COMMON WITH ONE ANOTHER THAN EACH HAS WITH CDU/CSU, AND THEIR COMBINED STRENGTH IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, STILL INDICATES THEIR CAPABILITY OF CARRYING THE ELECTORATE DESPITE A SERIES OF ELECTION LOSSES.

(3) THE PERIOD OF CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY IN BONN WILL BE SHORT-LIVED. A COALITION AGREEMENT MUST BE HAMMERED OUT BETWEEN NOW AND THE BUNDESVERSAMMLUNG ELECTION OF A FEDERAL PRESIDENT ON MAY 15.

AT THIS MOMENT NO ONE WITHIN THE SPD COULD OR WOULD CHALLENGE SCHMIDT FOR LEADERSHIP, AND HENCE HIS DESIGNATION AS SPD CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IS VIRTUALLY ASSURED. SIMILARLY, SCHMIDT IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE FDP AND WILL HAVE NO PROBLEM BEING CONFIRMED BY THE BUNDESTAG. SCHEEL SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO HOLD THE FDP TOGETHER, AND WITH ONE ANOTHER THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH A VIABLE COALITION. FIRST REACTION WILL COME JUNE 9 IN LOWER SAXONY.

(4) WHO BECOMES FEDERAL PRESIDENT AT THIS POINT IS LESS CERTAIN. BRANDT, DESPITE HIS ACCEPTING POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR, MIGHT CONCEIVABLY STILL EMERGE TO TAKE THE TOP SPOT BASED ON HIS INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE PLUS A CERTAIN WAVE OF SYMPATHY FOR HIM.

SCHEEL WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE MOST LIKELY NEXT FEDERAL PRESIDENT.

(5) THE NEW COALITION WILL TURN ITS PRIMARY ATTENTION TO SOLVING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. SCHMIDT CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO ALL HE CAN TO CONTROL INFLATION, PREVENT FURTHER UNEMPLOYMENT AND DEFEND THE STABILITY OF THE GERMAN MARK. HIS WILL BE A QUOTE GERMANY-FIRST UNQUOTE ADMINISTRATION.

(6) IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS HE WILL BE A TOUGH NEGOTIA-
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TOR, LESS INTERESTED IN EASTERN POLICY AND LESS INTERESTED IN COOPERATION WITH WESTERN EUROPE. SCHMIDT IS NO FRIEND OF THE EC, AND HAS LITTLE REGARD FOR THE FRENCH (ALTHOUGH HE TOUTS HIS CLOSE PERSONAL TIES TO GISCARD D'ESTAING).

(7) THE US WILL REMAIN GERMANY'S MOST IMPORTANT ALLY, BUT WE CAN EXPECT, AS IN THE PAST, TOUGH

SCHMIDT POSITIONS ON BUDGETARY AND DEFENSE ISSUES.

(8) IN PERSONNEL TERMS, WE WOULD EXPECT BAHR,
GRABERT AND OTHER OF BRANDT'S QUOTE BERLIN
ENTOURAGE UNQUOTE TO LOSE THEIR PORTFOLIOS IN
QUICK ORDER. THERE WILL PROBABLY ALSO BE NEW

FOREIGN AND INTERIOR MINISTERS.

(9) THE FOREGOING DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE
DETAILS OF THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR WHICH COULD HAVE
WIDER REPERCUSSIONS IN THE FDP AND SPD. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COALITION GOVERNMENT, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, ESPIONAGE AGENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL PARTIES, TOS EC 333
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE093432
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NCLEDSKY:WLS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740109-0644
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740568/aaaacims.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: BONN 7277
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <30-Sep-2002 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRANDT RESIGNS: FIRST IMPRESSIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, GE, US, (BRANDT, WILLY)
To: JERUSALEM NICOSIA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005